

Supply Chest

March 10, 2000

Navy Core Values: Honor, Courage, Commitment

Vol. 52 No. 4



Lt. Cmdr. Dan Zeise heads home to Wisconsin

Lt. Cmdr. Dan Zeise, FISC Code 700 "Fuel Czar," retired from active duty during ceremonies held at Craney Island on Friday, Feb. 25. His retirement ended 24 years of military service for the U.S. Naval Academy graduate who began his military career as an enlisted Marine.

Lt. Cmdr. Zeise received praise from FISC Commanding Officer, Capt. Alan S. Thompson, for spearheading several major military construction projects at the fuel facility, including pier upgrading, demolition of old fuel tanks, and the construction of modern tanks having state-of-the-art monitoring technology. Lt. Cmdr. Zeise received special recognition for guiding Craney Island through the transition from being government operated to being contracted out as the result of an A-76 study.

He will be returning to his hometown of Green Bay, Wis., where he will join his brother's business.

Response to SIP/VERA helps FISC Norfolk meet target strength

Sixty applications were received and approved by FISC Norfolk for people who decided to take advantage of the latest round of Separation Incentive Pay (SIP) and Voluntary Early Retirement Authority (VERA). The application deadline was Jan. 31, 2000.

"FISC Norfolk must meet a thirty percent reduction for areas involved in the A-76. Where A-76 is not applicable, we can expect a ten percent reduction in FY01 and probably FY02," said David Ball, FISC Norfolk's comptroller.

People participating in this round of SIP/VERA must be off the rolls by March 31, 2000. The most SIP/VERA applicants came from the Ocean Terminal, most likely because of the potential loss of jobs due to A-76 and Business Case Analyses (BCA).

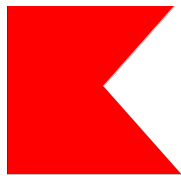
The Navy participates in these Department of Defense Programs to help reduce

(See SIP/VERA on page 7)

NAVSUP ADC Kevin Fitzpatrick tours Customer Information Center on FISC Visit



The Naval Supply System Command's Mr. Kevin Fitzpatrick, NAVSUP Assistant Deputy Commander for Fleet Logistics Operations, recently visited the Fleet and Industrial Supply Center, Norfolk. Included in his itinerary were stops at the Super ServMart and at the Navy Integrated Call Center (formerly known as the Customer Information Center, or CIC) located on the 6th floor of building W-143. In the photo Mr. Fitzpatrick is shown speaking with the call center's personnel supervisor, Ms. Sharon Brown. While in Norfolk, he also visited the Naval Sea Systems Command's Integrated Call Center. After completing his rounds of FISC, Mr. Fitzpatrick toured the Fitting Out and Supply Support Assistance Center (FOSSAC).



Bravo Zulu



Mr. Marvin V. Peralta from the Material Operations Department Regional Navy Mail Center was recently recognized for 35 years of federal service.



Mr. Edward Dawsey Jr., from FISC's Ocean Terminal Division (Code 302) and who is a transportation specialist, receives his certificate recognizing 40 years of federal service from Division Director, **Mr. Bill Richards**.



Mr. Calvin L. Pugh, who works in the Mail, Messenger, and Correspondence Section of FISC's Comptroller Department, was recently awarded a certificate honoring his 30 years of service to the federal government.



The Navy Mail Center's **Mr. Robert Taylor** was among four individuals recently honored for their length of service for the federal Government. **Mr. Taylor** received his certificate for his 30 years of government service.

Supply Chest

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People & Events



Ms. Debbie West and DDNV Commander, Capt. Dick Trowbridge, pose with FISC Executive Officer, Capt. Bob Howard after the two won the 3rd annual Chili Cookoff held on "Leap Day," Feb. 29 in the building W-143 6th floor mall.



Petty Officer 2nd Class Sonya Jackson, a postal clerk at FISC's Navy Regional Mail Center, reenlisted recently for two years. Administering the oath was Lt. j.g. Pamela D. Faison, the First Division officer aboard USS NASSAU (LHA 4).



Ms. Simone Williams and Ms. Margaret Brothier were recently recognized for their suggestion to improve Cheatham Annex's Personal Effects Distribution Center operations. Plans are to automate next-of-kin notification procedures to return effects.



Petty Officer 1st Class Stephen Carr from FISC's Special Material Supply Division is presented his plaque by FISC Commanding Officer, Capt. Alan S. Thompson, for being chosen as the command's Sailor of the Year. He is a gunner's mate at SMSD.



LT. Roscoe Porter, FISC Code 105 Director, has his lieutenant bars pinned on by his wife, Myrna, during his recent promotion.



SMSD's Petty Officer 2nd Class Michael Eden receives his Sailor of the Quarter plaque from Commanding Officer, Capt. Alan S. Thompson. Petty Officer Eden is a gunner's mate at SMSD.


**An Important Message to
South Hampton Roads Water Customers**


Beginning in Fall 2000

Something in Your Water is About to Change.

For many years, chlorine has been used to disinfect your drinking water because it kills viruses, bacteria and other microbes that can make you sick. Beginning in fall 2000, the cities of Chesapeake, Norfolk, Portsmouth, Suffolk and Virginia Beach will change the way they disinfect drinking water, using chloramines instead of chlorine. Chloraminated water is perfectly safe for drinking, cooking, bathing and all other everyday uses.


However, two groups of people should take special precautions in using chloraminated water: **kidney dialysis patients** and **fish owners**.


 Like chlorine, chloramines must be removed from water used in kidney dialysis machines. Local dialysis treatment centers and hospitals are being notified of this change. If you are a dialysis patient, or have questions, call your physician or the dialysis center nearest you.


 Like chlorine, chloramines are toxic to fish and must be removed from water before it is used in aquariums or ponds. Most pet stores sell water conditioners for chloraminated water. Contact your local pet store for details.


Striving to improve your water quality

This regional message brought to you by:


In Chesapeake, call 421-2146


In Norfolk, call 684-6701


In Virginia Beach, call 563-1400


In Portsmouth, call 539-2201

Navy Public Works Center
NORFOLK, VIRGINIA

In Suffolk, call 265-2247, ext. 4.

ET1 John Cardinal is FISC's new Career Counselor



Petty Officer 1st Class Jon G. Cardinal, an electronics technician assigned to the Special Material Supply Division (SMSD), is FISC's new command career counselor. He had been the division's training petty officer, and was also FISC's Sailor of the Year for the last quarter of 1999. A 17-year Navy veteran, Petty Officer Cardinal has been at FISC since November of 1998, when he reported from the submarine tender *USS EMORY S. LAND* (AS 39).

He is from El Paso, Texas, and would eventually like to teach college math after completing his naval career.

Display needs photos of local women workers

March is National Women's History Month - CEAP will have local display

CEAP hopes you will help celebrate National Women's History Month during March. To bring a local flavor to the observance, CEAP would like to acquire pictures of women from FISC, NAVTRANS, FOSSAC, and RSA. The photos will be part of CEAP's National Women's History collage on the bulletin board outside the CEAP office (across from the photo lab) on the 6th floor of building W-143, through the breezeway near the cafeteria.

This year's theme is, "An Extraordinary Century for Women - Now Imagine the Future." Celebrating

women's lives is worthwhile for all of us and being conscious of women's significant roles in all facets of our lives will increase everyone's awareness and regard for all women's achievements.

CEAP will distribute educational literature and place posters on bulletin boards to reinforce the positive effect women have had on history. Celebrating women's lives benefits us all, and recognizing their achievements is what the National Women's History Month represents!

Don't forget that CEAP offers numerous cost-free, professional counsel-

ing services to employees and immediate family members of FISC, NAVTRANS, FOSSAC and RSA. For information, please call Mrs. Veronica Thomas at 443-2049 or 443-1490.



FISC chosen to use pilot Dispute Resolution Process

Fleet and Industrial Supply Center Norfolk was recently selected as a test site for the Department of the Navy's Equal Employment Opportunity re-engineering pilot program. One primary benefit of the program will be employees' choice to use Dispute Resolution Options – these enable participants in a work place dispute to communicate openly in a non-adversarial atmosphere. This form of dispute resolution has proven to result in higher resolution rates, improved morale, better work environment, and significant cost avoidance through quicker and more efficient complaint administration processes.

The pilot program covers all current and former FISC civilian employ-

ees, and those civilians applying for work at FISC. Active duty military members are not covered. Participation in the program is voluntary. As an example of the time saved utilizing this form of dispute resolution: this pilot process of dispute resolution is completed in approximately 90 days, whereas resolving a complaint through traditional methods could take up to 749 days (longer than two years!).

FISC was chosen as a test site for the pilot program by Ms. Betty Welch, the Navy's Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Civilian Personnel/Equal Employment Opportunity.

If you would like more information about this program, contact Cheryl Andrews at 443-1031.

DoD workers face restrictions on political activities

With this year being a presidential election year, Department of Defense workers are reminded they face certain restrictions of political activities. While senior DoD employees, political appointees, and Senior Executive Service members face additional restrictions, there are some general rules applying to all DoD workers.

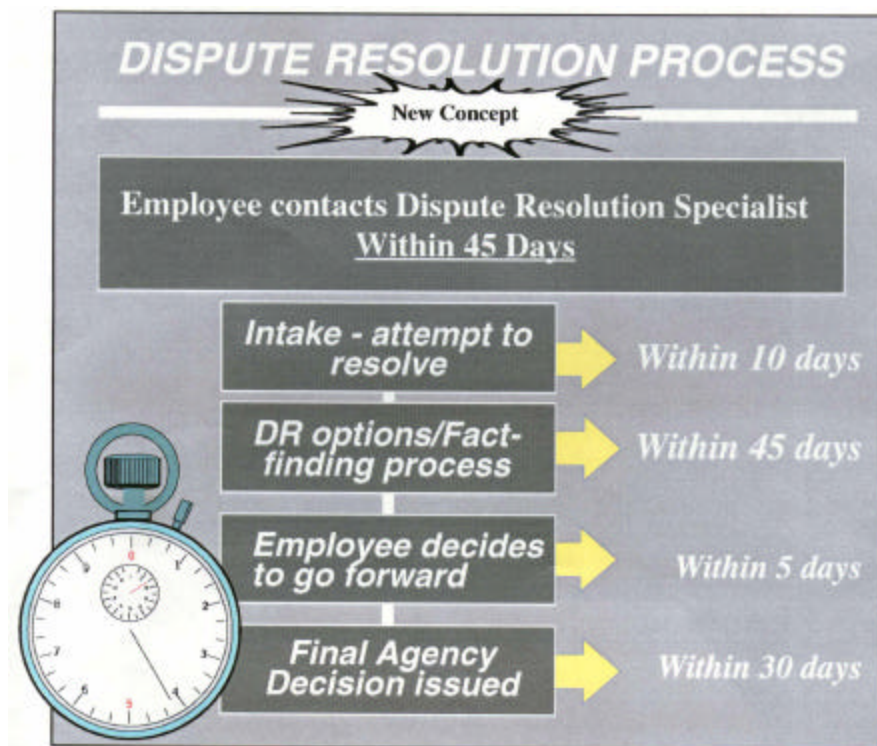
One cardinal rule is no employee may accept or receive political contributions.

Additionally, no DoD employee may use his or her official authority or influence to affect the outcome of an election, which includes using an official title while participating in any political activity or using authority to coerce fellow workers to participate in partisan political activity of any kind.

DoD workers are also prohibited from engaging in any political activity while on duty, which includes prohibitions against wearing political buttons or other articles promoting a partisan candidate. These restrictions apply while in any government building (whether it is owned or leased), while in any official uniform or wearing an official badge, insignia, or other such item, or when in a government vehicle.

No DoD worker can solicit or accept any political contribution – including uncompensated volunteer service. DoD employees also cannot run for nomination or election to public office in a partisan election (in certain designated communities, including some suburban areas surrounding Washington, D.C., an employee may run for office in a local partisan election, but that employee can do so only as an independent candidate).

While these are just general rules with which all DoD employees must comply, there are other restrictions based upon an individual's position, pay grade, etc. If in doubt, do not do it before checking with FISC's Office of Counsel (Code 08) at 443-1089.



In observance of March as National Women's Month, the Civilian Employee Assistance Program (CEAP) is sponsoring a lunch-and-learn session on Thursday, March 23rd, from 11 A.M. to noon. The guest speaker will Cmdr. Cathy Alexander, Customer Service Department (Code 100) Director. The session will be held in the Saturn Room on the 6th floor of building W-143.

Ribbon to be cut at new Regional Mail Center on March 14

For several months FISC's Navy and civilian postal clerks have been serving the mail needs of the Fleet while also moving thousands of pounds of equipment to what will officially become the new Regional Navy Mail Center on Tuesday, March 14. The

move from the current building W-313 to U-132 aboard Naval Station's Chambers Field was made because newly acquired, modern postal equipment required more floor space. The new location offers 21,000 sq. ft. of new space, and the ribbon-cutting will offi-

cially make U-132 the Regional Navy Mail Center.

While some postal work will temporarily continue out of W-313 until the new center is "fine-tuned," all mail operations will eventually be taking place out of U-132.



Employees taking SIP//VERA help FISC meet targeted end strength

(continued from page 1)

the number of civilian employees. Under these programs, eligible employees who choose to voluntarily leave government service receive cash incentives.

An employee is eligible to receive a buyout if:

- the employee receives a buyout offer from the agency during the time period of the SIP/VERA;
- the employee accepts the buyout offer;
- the employee voluntarily retires, takes voluntary early retirement, or voluntarily resigns during the approved buyout window;
- The amount of the buyout is equal to the lesser of severance pay calculation; \$25,000; or an amount determined by the agency head.

An employee is not eligible to receive a buyout if the employee:

- is a reemployed annuitant;
- has a disability on the basis of which the employee would be eligible for a disability retirement;
- is serving under an appointment with a time limitation;
- has not been onboard with the agency without a break in service for 3 continuous years;
- is in receipt of a specific notice of involuntary separation for misconduct or unacceptable performance;
- is completing service in order to receive an approved "delayed buyout" under the Federal Workforce Restructuring Act of 1994;
- has received a buyout before but has not repaid it;
- is covered by statutory reemployment rights from another organization;
- has received a recruitment or relocation bonus within 24 months of separating to receive a buyout ;
- has received a retention bonus within 12 months of separating to receive a buyout.

Before using this authority, any agency wishing to use buyouts must submit an Agency Strategic Plan outlining its planned use of buyouts to the House and Senate appropriations and government affairs committees. The plan must detail positions and functions to be eliminated, the number of buyouts to be paid, how the agency will operate without the eliminated positions, etc. FISC Norfolk receives its authority for SIP/VERA from NAVSUP.

An agency must pay a 15 percent contribution to the retirement fund for each incentive paid. The 15 percent is based upon an employee's final basic pay. The agency paying buyouts must reduce its staff by one full-time equivalent for each incentive it pays.

Employees who accept SIP/VERA incentives must repay the entire amount of that incentive to the agency which paid the buyout before the employee's first day of work if he or she accepts employment with the federal government, or enters into a personal services contract with the federal government, within five years of separating with the incentive.

There is no authority to waive this repayment requirement, which is law. FISC Norfolk being able to offer SIP/VERA to eligible employees helps reduce the potential impact of a Reduction-in-Force (RIF). What about the future of FISC employees? As the government payroll continues to shrink, personnel actions are inevitable, however, through such programs as SIP/VERA and other efforts, FISC Norfolk has established a legacy of helping its employees. It will continue to do just that in the years to come.

Revised NAVSUP Strategic Plan is being shipped and is online

"Our updated Strategic Plan is now in distribution and on the web (www.navsup.navy.mil). It reflects the best thoughts of our leadership for the next five years and has my personal support. I expect the challenge of transforming the plan into a reality will require a lot of hard work...in the business plans we are producing and in the skills we bring to the table every day. Our united supply team is strong and talented, and I have confidence that with this road map in place we will meet and exceed the challenges of this 21st century." – Rear Adm. Keith W. Lippert, SC, USN, Chief of the Navy Supply Corps.

In the coming weeks hard copies of NAVSUP's revised Strategic Plan will arrive at NAVSUP claimancies. The revised plan differs from the existing plan in a number of ways: the mission statement is expanded, the vision statement has been modified, and the six strategic initiatives have been replaced with four new strategic goals.

What has not changed is NAVSUP's commitment to provide support that is easy to get, customer focused and efficiently delivered. At FISC Norfolk, a link to the new strategic plan can be found on the bottom of FISC Norfolk's web site's home page at www@nor.fisc.navy.mil.

Office products can be ordered from your desk

Office products and supplies are now available online via a new Javits-Wagner-O'Day (JWOD) web site. Federal employees can now buy numerous business and office products right from their desks, using a new web site launched by the JWOD Program. The site can be reached at www.jwod.com, and provides federal customers with convenient, one-stop shopping.

Tidewater Happings

Several events are taking place throughout Hampton Roads from March to May. Monday, March 6, marked the beginning "100 Years of Silence: Centennial of the U.S. Navy's Submarine Force," an exhibit at the Hampton Roads Naval Museum inside Nauticus.

The International Azalea Festival begins Tuesday, April 25. Among the festivities will be a golf tournament on Thursday, April 27. The festival climax will be the air show at Naval Station's Chandler Field (formerly NAS Norfolk) on the weekend of April 28 and 29.

For May, watch the Supply Chest for information on an upcoming Navy League auto sale. Also in May – from May 4 - 26, there will be a traveling model of the Confederate submarine HUNLEY on display at Nauticus. Don't forget about the environment: Mt Trashmore Earth Day will be held on Sunday, May 7.

Electrical Safety Tips

You should be aware that electricity is the leading cause of household and residential fires. To prevent electrical fires, don't overload electrical outlets with too many appliances or pieces of equipment. Also maintain all electrical equipment such as tools and lights, etc., in good working order – this includes replacing frayed wires and bent or damaged plugs. An electrical shock can kill. If you're a home owner, it would be beneficial to install Ground Fault Circuit Interrupter (GFCI) outlets in kitchens, bathrooms or in any damp or wet locations. The GFCI outlet automatically trips off due to contact with water or detects an electrical short in equipment. Questions? Contact the Sewells Point Safety Office aboard Naval Station, Norfolk at 322-2917 or 322-2928.

New AMC passenger terminal to open this summer



Progress continues on the new passenger building (pictured above) for the Navy-operated Air Mobility Command's Norfolk passenger terminal. The terminal's steady increase in importance and passenger volume over the past several years necessitated construction of a new passenger terminal, which began longer than a year ago. It is scheduled to be finished in the summer of 2000. The \$15 million project will result in a three-level, 36,000-square-foot facility and will have two jet way boarding ramps so passengers will no longer have to brave the weather when boarding aircraft. It will also have an expanded baggage claim and immigration areas, two children's playgrounds, and a larger USO/Navy Exchange cafeteria. The three-story passenger terminal will be one of the few AMC terminals in the world to have enclosed jet ways like commercial airports. It will also offer numerous other amenities for passengers. Below is an architectural rendering of the building as it will appear upon completion.



***Here's to you, as good as you are, And here's to me, as bad as I am;
But as good as you are, and as bad as I am,
I am still as good as you are, as bad as I am.***

- Old Scottish Toast -

Rollup door on west end of W-143 has new opening hours

Since Feb. 23, there are specific times during which the rollup door on the west end (facing the water) of building W-143 will be open. The rollup door will not be open on weekends and holidays. Open door hours (Monday through Friday) are: 6 - 8:45 A.M. and 3:15 - 6 P.M.

The door will be closed from 8:45 A.M. to 3:15 P.M., and closes for the evening at 6 P.M. It will not be open during lunch.

When the rollup door is closed, workers can enter W-143 via the ramp to the right of the Customer Service Center main entrance. Walk up the ramp and enter via the door to the left. You will enter the CSC rear office. Walk straight to the door ahead, exit and this will give you access to elevator no. 9. To exit the west end of W-143 when the door is closed (during normal working hours), exit elevator no. 9, turn left and enter the door (there will be a sign indicating "exit W-143"). Walk straight ahead through the rear offices of the CSC to the ramp and exit. If you have questions, contact Ray Spivey in the Security Office at 443-1517.

"Gas costs too much. . ." Be glad your car doesn't run on mouth wash

You think a gallon of gasoline is expensive? Below are some cost comparisons for a gallon of . . .

- Whiteout 7 oz. for \$1.39 equals \$254.17 per gallon
- STP Brake Fluid 12 oz. for \$3.15 equals \$33.60 per gallon
- Vick's Nyquil 6 oz. for \$8.35 equals \$178.13 per gallon
- Pepto Bismol 4 oz. for \$3.85 equals \$123.20 per gallon
- Scope 1.5 oz. for \$0.99 equals \$84.84 per gallon

The next time you're at the gas pump, be glad your car is not fueled with Whiteout!

A true Jazz aficionado displays a love for the music



Public Affairs Office graphic artist Steve Craddock poses by the jazz display he designed and set up in observance of Black History Month. He produced all the graphics and has many of the albums displayed. The display was in the 6th floor main elevator lobby of building W-143 and required countless hours of work, much of it done after normal working hours.

SPEED BUMP

Dave Coverly



Medical Tips . . .



Snoring can be hazardous

Snoring is not only annoying but can also be dangerous. A recent report in the Journal of the American Heart Association noted strokes can be caused by obstructive apnea. This is a condition in some heavy snorers in which breathing temporarily stops and by doing so creates pressure in the chest, which in turn reduces oxygen flow to the brain.

If you are a serious snorer (meaning people can hear you snoring from another room!) or if you wake up exhausted each morning, check with your physician to see if you have obstructive apnea.

Be cautious when giving medicines to children

Educate your children to use medicines wisely by following the below suggestions:

- Read the directions on the label of a medicine dispenser with your child and follow them exactly.
- Give the prescribed medicinal dosage indicated even if your child feels better after only a few doses, especially when taking antibiotics.
- Tell your child to immediately inform you or someone available of any unexpected side effects or reactions after taking the medicine.
 - Educate your children to become smart medical consumers by encouraging them to ask questions such as
 - Why do I have to take a particular medicine?
 - How long must I take it?
 - When must I take it?
 - What side effects should I look for?

How much has the government shrunk?

The federal government has shrunk from 2.1 to 1.8 million employees during the past seven years, but individual agencies have varied in the number of employees gained or lost. Below are current figures for selected agencies, in order of the percentage of their individual work forces lost or gained.

More than 50 percent loss of employees

Office of Personnel Management

20 to 50 percent loss

General Services Administration

Tennessee Valley Authority

Department of Defense

National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA)

Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

Energy

10 to 20 percent loss

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Department of State

Department of Agriculture

Department of Veterans Affairs

Department of the Interior

Smithsonian Institution

Department of the Treasury

0 to 10 percent loss

Department of Transportation

Department of Education

Department of Labor

Social Security Administration

Department of Health and Human Services

Environmental Protection Agency

Agencies gaining staff

Department of Commerce - approximately 17 percent gain

Department of Justice - approximately 33 percent gain

Of the agencies losing or gaining the most, remember that two of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) major functions – the background investigations program and the training program – were contracted out and other nonfederal organizations now provide those services. Of the “winners,” (departments which gained personnel) remember that the gains in Commerce are almost exclusively the result of the year 2000 census, while Justice grew with the Clinton Administration’s programs on crime prevention and drugs.

Next Blood Drive is scheduled for March 23

The Navy Medical Center, Portsmouth, will sponsor a blood drive on Thursday, March 23, in the Hampton Room on the 6th floor of building W-143 between 10 A.M. and 2 P.M. The points of contact for scheduling a time to donate – and for more information – are (for FISC) Helen Taylor in the satellite Human Resources Office at 443-1028, and (for DDNV) Rosalind Bremby at 443-3446.

Looking farther ahead: the 2nd civilian quarterly awards ceremony is scheduled for Tuesday, April 25, at 10 A.M. in the building W-143 6th Floor Mall.



AK Rating soon to be no more; Submarine centennial stamps are coming

Aviation storekeepers going to the history books

The Secretary of the Navy recently approved the merger of the Aviation Storekeeper (AK) and Storekeeper (SK) ratings into the SK rating. The AK ratings will be phased out within the next three years and gone by year 2003. The conversion from AK to SK for rated sailors will be automatic. AK responsibilities will be included in the new SK rating. NAVADMIN 023/00 outlines the merger of the two ratings.

"The merger of AKs and SKs will allow for greater flexibility with detailing and broader career paths for Sailors," said Vice Adm. Norb Ryan Jr., Chief of Naval Personnel. "This merger will also enhance the overall quality within the ship and shore supply departments."

The conversion from aviation storekeeper to storekeeper will begin at the senior chief petty officer and master chief petty officer level on a gradual basis, beginning in the spring of 2000, with the conversion expected to be finished by January 2003.

An executive committee and implementation team will meet Feb. 15-17 at the Navy Supply Corps School in Athens, Ga., to establish specific milestones for the conversions.

More information on the merger is Navy administrative message, see NAVADMIN 023/00, which can be viewed on the Bureau of personnel (BUPERS) web site at www.bupers.navy.mil.

Stamps honor Submarine Centennial

This year the Navy is celebrating 100 years of submarine service. To honor the occasion, the U.S. Postal Service announced that Groton, Conn., will be the first city to be issued the U.S. Navy Submarines commemorative postage stamps, and will host the official dedication ceremony March 27. The exact location of the ceremony will be announced soon.

Groton is the home of Naval Submarine Base, New London, which was

the Navy's first submarine base. New London is also where the Navy's historic 1st nuclear powered submarine, NAUTILUS, is permanently moored and it is the site of the Navy's Submarine Force Museum.

There will be five Navy submarine stamp designs depicting different periods in submarine technology, and they will be available in the 1st U.S. commemorative prestige booklet, containing text and photographs in addition to the stamps. The 33-cent design will also be available in a separate pane of 20 stamps.

The 60-cent stamp design in the booklet features the 1st submarine bought by the U.S. Navy, the HOLLAND, which was purchased in 1900. The 22-cent stamp design depicts an S-class submarine showing changes in technology and size that after HOLLAND.

The GATO-class submarine appearing on the \$3.20 stamp represents the contributions that submarines made to American naval superiority in the Pacific during World War II. LOS ANGELES-class attack submarines

will be highlighted on the 33-cent stamp design in the booklet, and separately in the 20-stamp pane are various nuclear powered submarines.

The 55-cent stamp depicts the OHIO-class submarine. At 560 feet long with 24 Trident ballistic missiles, it represents an ever-present deterrent to possible military aggression.

The U.S. Navy Submarines stamps were illustrated by James Griffiths of Glenview, Ill. Carl Herrman of Carlsbad, Calif., was art director.

The prestige booklet and the separate pane of 33-cent stamps will be available in Groton on March 27. Beginning March 28, the pane of 33-cent stamps will be available at post offices nationwide. The prestige booklet will be available only at philatelic centers, postal stores and via mail order.

To see images of the stamps visit www.usps.com/news, and open this news release (#00-014) and click on the link to the stamp images. To order other U.S. stamps and philatelic items, go to www.stampsonline.com or call 1-800-STAMP-24.

We love our chocolate!

Americans consume an average of 12 pounds of chocolate annually, with 88 percent preferring milk chocolate over the dark, or bittersweet, variety. Incidentally, white chocolate is not real chocolate per se, but is instead a mixture of sugar, cocoa butter, milk, and flavorings.

Speaking of chocolate – chocolate chip cookies are the ones most frequently baked in American homes.

Marco Polo is not the father of pasta!

Legend has it – and the emphasis is on legend – that 13th century explorer Marco Polo learned about pasta in China and brought it back to Europe in 1292. Historians, however, discredit that story, calling it a mere myth, and they point to an inventory from 1279 found in Genoa, Italy, which lists a "bariscella plena de macaronis" or a basket of macaroni. Going back even earlier to 1150, Arab geographer Al-Idrisi wrote of dry flour-based strips and strings, which were a staple in ships and caravans. Today, spaghetti is the favorite form of pasta for 38 percent of consumers. The 2nd favorite is elbow macaroni, at 16 percent.

Here are the 10 "best" foods at the grocery store

The Center for Science in the Public Interest recently listed the top 10 most nutritious foods that you are likely to find on supermarket shelves: beans, oranges, broccoli, fat-free or one percent milk, oatmeal, spinach and kale, strawberries, cantaloupe, sweet potatoes, and whole-grain bread.

FY 2001 pay raise might be another good one

As he promised, President Clinton has submitted his fiscal year 2001 budget proposal and included a recommended 3.7-percent pay raise for federal employees. However, some legislators are already saying they will push for a 4.2-percent increase, and lawmakers also plan on submitting proposals which would allow federal workers to pay health insurance premiums out of pre-tax dollars (reducing a worker's taxable income since he or she would be taxed only on the income amount remaining after premium costs are deducted).

Some members of Congress also want to repeal increased retirement contributions federal employees now pay, and legislators might attempt to revoke action taken last year which would delay this fiscal year's last paycheck for military and federal workers until the new fiscal year.

Office of Personnel Management (OPM) Director Janice R. Lachance emphasized recently that should the President's 3.7-percent raise be passed – combined with last year's 4.7-percent raise – an "average" federal employee earning \$54,000 annually would get an additional \$2,658.

Another issue which will be debated this year will be that of long term care (LTC) insurance – six different LTC bills are now waiting for congressional action.

As promising as these issues may appear for federal workers, it must be pointed out that budget wrangling is invariably drawn out until the last days of the expiring fiscal year, with potential government shutdown and continuing resolutions becoming an annual norm. Despite hope that these bills may be passed and enacted, federal workers should not get too excited and instead adopt and wait-and-see attitude. After all, this year is an election year.



"GI Joe" should be the person of the century

Millions of people today owe their freedom to GI Joe, said nationally known author and historian Stephen E. Ambrose during a recent appearance in Washington, D.C.

"With the end of the century, the question of who to name the most important person of the century is being asked everywhere. My own nominee, the one who is the obvious winner the moment you think about it, is GI Joe – the soldier, the sailor, the airman, the Marine, the Coast Guardsman of the twentieth century," he said.

Incidentally, the term, "GI" came from the phrase, "government issue."

Congress urged to halt and study outsourcing downsizing before proceeding with A-76

The Federal Managers Association has urged Congress to halt contracting out and downsizing the federal government until a special panel can study and make recommendations about the future of the government. FMA National President Michael Styles recommends that Congress create a blue-ribbon panel consisting of FMA and union members, along with other experts, who will recommend to the President and congressional leaders "the optimal size and shape of the federal government of the 21st century. Mr. Styles meanwhile asked Congress to place a moratorium on government downsizing and outsourcing while the panel conducts its review.

"While the current administration claims the era of big government is over, many observers believe that federal workers have simply been replaced with a shadow workforce of contractors," Styles wrote in a letter to Sen. Fred Thompson (R-Tenn.) chairman of the Senate Governmental Affairs Committee, and Rep. Dan Burton (R-Ind.), chairman of the House Government Reform and Oversight Committee.

"The 272,900 civil service position reduction enacted by Congress at the Administration's request in 1994 was not preceded by a careful study of what functions the government would no longer perform or how agencies would implement efficiency measures," Styles said. "For many agencies the mantra of do more with less has been translated into simply do less with less."

FMA also requested that Congress scrutinizes an increase of waivers used by agencies seeking to skirt public-private competition requirements by Office of Management and Budget Circular A-76.

He betrayed the public trust

Americans rely upon government workers to serve them and guard their interests in numerous ways, and statistics indicate the overwhelming majority of "feds" are devoted and loyal workers dedicated to serving the public interests. There are rare occasions when a federal worker's misplaced ideology or loyalties, greed, or personal difficulties, run counter to the public interest.

One such unfortunate incident recently took place within the Immigration and Naturalization Service. A senior official – Mariano Faget – apparently did not know where his political loyalties lay. He was born in Cuba and came to the U.S. as a teenager, living here ever since. The FBI knew Mr. Faget had political identity problems, and set a trap to see if he was clandestinely working for his native Cuba.

Within minutes after having been intentionally given false information about the possible defection of a Cuban official, Mr. Faget was taped passing the "tip" to a representative of the Cuban government. The FBI moved out quickly on the case because Mr. Faget was scheduled to soon retire. Ironically and although caught in the act of spying for Fidel Castro, the INS official might still be able to collect his retirement, depending upon the conviction (if any) he will be handed after his trial.